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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the development of virtual libraries by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Counseling and Students Services (ERIC/CASS). The International Career Development Library (ICDL) is discussed in detail and the features of the ICDL are described. These features include: the Search feature, providing access to the ICDL database via a customized search engine; Papers and Commentary, which serves as an on-line forum for presenting and discussing information and ideas of interest to career specialists; Reference Room, providing a comprehensive list of links to career-related resources beyond the virtual library; the Training Center, featuring an on-line training registry of instructors prepared to offer training in career-related programs; Member Services, containing the ICDL Library Card that provides special privileges and access to select library features; the Document Submission section, which welcomes materials of interest to practitioners in career counseling and guidance, educators, researchers, librarians, and others working in the field of career and workforce development; and the What's New section, highlighting information that is new and newsworthy. The plans for the future development of this virtual library are also described. (MKA)

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The International Career Development Library: The Use of Virtual Libraries to Promote Counselor Learning

Garry R. Walz and L. Star Reedy

Counselor effectiveness is strongly influenced by the counselor's ability to access and utilize quality information. Traditionally, the major source of information regarding counseling for use in counselor preparation and continuing professional development has come from books and journals. With the advent of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) in 1966 and the establishment of one of the clearinghouses with a primary focus on counseling (ERIC Counseling and Student Services—ERIC/CASS), counselors were able to access relevant counseling resources from a national education database. This provided them the opportunity to search (both manually and by computer) not only journal and book literature but also "fugitive" literature that became available in full text on microfiche.

A common practice for counselors pursuing a project or doing a literature review for an advanced degree was to use one of the commercial services (e.g., DIALOG or BRS) to search the ERIC database. They selected descriptors from the ERIC Thesaurus and submitted them to a trained search specialist. About 10 days later, they received a computer printout of the annotations/abstracts of relevant journal articles and ERIC documents. They then went to a library with an ERIC microfiche collection and viewed the full text of the documents on a microfiche reader. For access to the full text of any journal article, they had to locate the journal itself.

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In retrospect, this system seems somewhat tedious and limiting, but at the time it vastly expanded a counselor's ability to identify and retrieve resources relevant to his or her interests. However, with the exception of some special categories (e.g., ERIC Digests On-line), counselors still had to go physically to a library to obtain the full text of the documents of interest to them. With the advent of the Internet, counselors are now able to conduct their own on-line searches, providing them with immediate identification of resources.

In the 1990s, the Internet made possible the virtual library, or a library without walls. In a virtual library a user experiences ". . . collections of information as though physically in the library" (Saunders, 1992). In its true form, a virtual library provides the effect of a library that ". . . is a synergy created by bringing together technologically the resources of many, many libraries and information services" (Gapen, 1992).

It is as if individuals can transpose themselves into a super library where they can easily examine huge holdings on any variety of topics. And what makes the holdings of the bulging shelves so attractive is that not only can in-house collections be searched, but also distant collections of resources can be accessed—collections ordinarily not available except through the use of indexing sites such as Yahoo or (what seems a tedious process today) interlibrary loans.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNSELING VIRTUAL LIBRARIES

After examining the concept of the virtual library, it became apparent to ERIC/CASS that it was worthy of experimentation and that ERIC/CASS should proceed to develop a number of virtual libraries on topics of high criticality for counselors (Walz, 1997). It appeared that it was possible to design a series of virtual libraries that were responsive to the special information needs of counselors and could exhibit some distinguishing characteristics that would make them particularly attractive to counselors. The design ERIC/CASS developed was built around seven distinguishing characteristics:

1. **Resources are available in full text and can be easily downloaded.** An important priority is to include only docu-

ments that, because of their high quality, counselors will want to download for their files and/or distribute to clients and students. The key factors here are that the documents be immediately downloadable (no trip to the library required) and that they be in the public domain or possess a copyright release so that they can be copied and distributed without limitation.

2. **The libraries target critical, high priority counseling topics.** ERIC/CASS's intent is to keep each library at a manageable size by focusing on topics that lend themselves to being adequately covered by relatively few documents as opposed to large, unwieldy collections. Quantity is accomplished by hot linking to other web sites and collections.
3. **The libraries require no special skills to search and use.** By building on traditional library indexing and retrieval methods that users are familiar with, ERIC/CASS has made the libraries both inviting and rewarding to use. Typical indexes include such functional categories as specific populations, resources for parents, practitioner role, and age/grade level.
4. **Libraries are regularly updated.** ERIC/CASS's goal is to review and update each library every 2 to 4 weeks by adding new resources and purging outdated ones. The dates when they were last updated are indicated, and the home page of each library contains a notice of any particularly useful new items that have been added. Again, the intention is to make each library familiar and comfortable by simulating through electronic means the features of a proactive onsite library.
5. **Each library includes a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section.** This feature demonstrates to users that their responses to the libraries are important to the developers. When done in a thoughtful manner, the FAQs can become a proactive form of elevating the level of information-seeking skills of the users.
6. **Virtual libraries for counselors are introduced on the basis of a clear demonstrated need.** The decisions regarding topics for the virtual libraries are dependent upon input from Central ERIC, the U.S. Department of Education, professional associations, and ERIC/CASS advisory groups. The libraries are also time limited, that is, if a given library is infrequently used or

support for its continuance is lacking, its resources are incorporated into another virtual library.

7. **New acquisitions for the virtual libraries are aggressively sought from multiple sources.** Inclusion of a document in a virtual library typically results in wide international exposure for the author and provides experienced or new authors an excellent medium for sharing their ideas.

Using these listed characteristics as guiding principles, 10 topical virtual libraries have been introduced and are currently functioning. These are Career Development (ICDL), Student Achievement, Cultural Diversity, Conflict Resolution, School Violence, Bullying in Schools, Depression and Suicide, Substance Abuse, Youth Gangs, and Juvenile Boot Camps. All can be accessed at www.uncg.edu/edu/ericcass/libhome.htm.

It is a source of considerable pride for ERIC/CASS that two of the libraries (Youth Gangs and Juvenile Boot Camps) have been selected for the StudyWeb Excellence Award. Although these two have been singled out, ERIC/CASS believes that the awards apply to all of the libraries and are in recognition of the soundness of the original design. Subsequent positive user feedback and the number of "hits" by users confirm the usefulness of the libraries to counselors of varying positions and in different settings.

A career development library was one of the first and most highly regarded virtual libraries to be developed. The positive response to it was instrumental in a decision to upgrade it to a larger and more sophisticated web site, the International Career Development Library, which is described in the next section.

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT LIBRARY

After approximately 2 years of experience with the counseling virtual libraries, ERIC/CASS joined with the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) to design and implement a unique library for career development specialists. Juliette Lester, executive director of NOICC, and James Woods, NOICC information specialist, saw early on the potential of a virtual library for career development and were vital participants in its development. Important ongoing contributions have also been

made by Burt Carlson and Roberta Kaplan, both of NOICC. The vision was to develop a web site that was unusual in the quality and quantity of free, on-line career development resources it offered to career specialists representing a broad array of positions and levels, such as career planning specialists, NOICC/SOICC personnel, counselor educators, state career guidance supervisors, and school counselors. It was designed to be a frequently used resource for career specialists to broaden their career development knowledge and competencies to better serve a wide variety of clients.

Features of the ICDL

The International Career Development Library (ICDL) is a free, on-line collection of full-text resources for specialists in the field of career development. The ICDL is an on-line library that was developed based on a library model and offers electronic versions of such features as a library card, a card catalog, a reference room, and the ability to browse the stacks.

The ICDL web site (http://icdl.uncg.edu) features seven main sections: Search, Papers and Commentary, Document Submission, Reference Room, Training Center, Member Services, and What's New. Comments and questions related to any section can be sent by e-mail to icdl@uncg.edu.

Search

The main feature of the ICDL is the Search, which serves as the library card catalog. This catalog provides access to the ICDL database via a customized search engine developed for the ICDL. There are three approaches to the search:

- The Complete Catalog Search is a search engine that scans the abstracts of all holdings in the library. This search allows the user to customize retrieval for specific author and date.
- The Free Text Search is a search engine that scans the full text of all html documents in the library.
- The Scroll and Search is a list that provides access to the ICDL database by the arrangement of all holdings in a comprehensive index list. This search allows the user to browse the stacks of the library.

Papers and Commentary

Another prominent feature of the ICDL is the Papers and Commentary section. This is an on-line forum for presenting and discussing information and ideas of interest to career specialists. New papers, contributed by a range of career development experts, are posted periodically. This feature includes options to read and respond, read commentary from colleagues and the author, print papers or save them to be read off-line, and respond by posting comments to the on-line discussion.

Before a paper is removed from active debate, its author has an opportunity to respond to readers' commentary. The papers, as well as the accompanying comments, are then issued as a publication and archived in the ERIC database and the ICDL permanent collection.

Reference Room

The ICDL Reference Room provides a comprehensive list of links to career-related resources beyond the library. Links include on-line professional journals and publications, libraries and research centers, professional associations and organizations, and web sources on job search and career planning.

Training Center

The ICDL Training Center section features an on-line training registry of instructors prepared to offer training in career-related programs. Information for paraprofessionals employed in workforce or career development programs who are interested in earning credentials as a Career Development Facilitator (CDF) is provided. Also provided is access to the registry (maintained by the National Career Development Association) of qualified instructors prepared to offer the course.

Member Services

The ICDL Member Services section features the ICDL Library Card, which provides special privileges and access to select library features such as

- permitting the user to post comments regarding papers published in the Papers and Commentary section of the library;

- registering the user to receive e-mail notification when new papers are posted for discussion on the ICDL Papers and Commentary; and
- registering the user for e-mail notification of the ICDL database updates in any of 15 established areas of interest.

Document Submission

The ICDL Document Submission section welcomes materials of interest to practitioners in career counseling and guidance, educators, researchers, librarians, and others working in the field of career and workforce development. To facilitate contribution to the ICDL database, selection criteria and submission requirements are outlined on-line.

The simple two-step process for contributing to the database is explained. Document submission requires (1) an electronic (or paper) copy of the document and (2) a signed ICDL Reproduction Release.

Also in this section are answers to FAQs such as the following:

- What are the ICDL selection criteria?
- What are the advantages of having a document in the ICDL database?
- What does it cost?
- Are there any forms to fill out?
- Where do I send my document?
- How will I know if my document has been accepted?
- How long does it take to get a document into ICDL?

What's New

The ICDL What's New section highlights information that is new and noteworthy. Section features typically include New Paper Postings, Future Paper Postings, Recent Acquisitions, and Calls for Proposals.

Future Development of the ICDL

The ICDL is a work in progress. Though fully functional well before the Millennium, it is planned that the system will grow in size and features in the months ahead. Some of the insights that

ERIC/CASS has accrued to date follow. ERIC/CASS believes they are important not only to the future development of the ICDL but also to all who are engaged in comparable systems development.

- Building a database of essentially original and full-text materials that are available for downloading and reproduction is very desirable but difficult to implement. The ability for users to build their own "book" through personal selection of documents is attractive, but locating and obtaining publication clearance for each document is difficult. It is important to establish ongoing acquisition agreements with relevant organizations for building databases of sufficient quality and quantity.
- The ICDL type of web site is well suited to offering training modules for users. The modules can be of two types. The first type assists the user to better understand and use the system (library). Few users, for instance, are very experienced in strategizing sophisticated searches using Boolian logic, that is, combining terms with *and*, *or*, and *not* commands. The second type addresses topical or subject areas such as building portfolios. Modules of both types serve to orient users to the library as an ongoing source of professional development. Both types, however, should carry CEUs to motivate people to use them.
- Two of the most innovative features of the ICDL are the Papers and Commentary section, which offers users the opportunity to post their comments regarding a featured paper, and the personalized e-mail notices of new documents in members' areas of interest. Both of these features are enthusiastically viewed by ICDL users. In actual practice, it takes considerable "pump priming" to get users involved in using the new features, even highly desirable ones. Desirability apparently is often not a sufficient reason for using an innovative web site feature.
- Certain features are almost universally requested. Special collections where documents of a particular type are located on a special "shelf" or section of the library are frequently requested. Even though a good search can provide a comparable clustering of documents, the special collection feature is still positively viewed. It may also stimulate submissions so that a given person's work is contained in a collection of comparable work by others.

- It appears that a particularly useful way to popularize a special counseling resource is under the auspices of various sponsoring groups that offer training in the implementation and use of the new system. A special workshop for users offered in conjunction with a board meeting or as part of a larger training initiative seems to be an excellent way both to motivate and stimulate persons to use the new resource for upgrading their counseling knowledge.
- On-line virtual libraries that target specific counseling topics, such as career development and student achievement, are well received by counseling and career professionals. Practitioners and educators alike respond positively to both the database variety with sophisticated search strategies (e.g., the ICDL) and the menu-driven variety with collections of documents that are extensively cross-referenced but grouped in key categories such as age/grade level and type of problem (e.g., the ERIC/CASS Virtual Counseling Libraries). A key variable in the frequency and breadth of use appears to be the extent to which professional leaders and educators support and promote them. Demonstrations and presentations at national conference and workshops have been shown to increase the regular use of and positive response to them.

CONCLUSION

Early signs are that the technical challenges posed by developing a web site with many innovative technological components can be more readily accomplished than motivating persons to use the system—even when the system is perceived as useful and desirable. This suggests that a new technologically driven innovation will not be adopted and used based solely upon its apparent merits. It requires numerous initiatives to acquaint people with the innovation and to prepare them to use it. This result is consistent with a body of research on adoption and utilization of innovations, but is easily downplayed in the enthusiasm over the attractiveness of a new technology.

The original planning, which emphasized both meeting the technical challenges of developing an innovative virtual library and promoting its use through professional contacts and support, appears

fully justified. Future efforts need to focus on installing new features as well as informing and motivating counselors to use the system.

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